

# IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

## Extension and Outreach

### **Success Story**

#### **Title**

The Lasting Impact Of A Successful Extension Career

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#### **Author's Location**

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#### **CoReporter(s) - ISUEO Staff**

- Eggers, Timothy R [EXTAG]

#### **Relevance**

After twenty-two years as an agricultural economist in Southwest Iowa and highly dedicated member of the ISU Extension and Outreach Farm Management Team, Tim Eggers is transitioning to his next role as a farm owner and operator. Eggers blazed a trail by developing several long-lasting, highly successful programs that provided education to many and will continue beyond his tenure with ISU Extension. In his wake, he leaves a lasting impact on the many Extension clients he interacted with over the years and a prime example of a successful career in Extension.

Eggers is highly respected by his colleagues and we look forward to serving him in his new role, as one of our many out-of-state clients.

#### **Response**

Below are highlights of a few of the programs Tim has been instrumental in developing and delivering through ISU Extension and Outreach. The summary of each program doesn't do justice to the time and commitment in taking a seed of an idea and expanding it into statewide and sometimes multi-state programs that have impacts beyond the program participants to their farm, families, and agricultural clients they also serve. This also does not include the one-time presentations, one-on-one client requests, and countless emails and phone calls that are so much a part of the work our Extension specialists do.

Seeing a need for program delivery outside the norm, Tim developed the **Ag Management e-School** to provide management education through in-depth, self-study courses. Peaking with seven different course offerings, the four most popular included: *Advanced Grain Marketing*, *Financial Decision Making*, *Farm Leasing Arrangements*, and *Farm Land Valuation*. To date, the Financial Decision Making course has provided educational credits for 801 USDA FSA borrowers, and will continue to serve this roll going forward through the newest distance education technology ISU offers due to Tim's efforts.

Tim was instrumental in bringing the highly successful **Annie's Project** program to Iowa in 2004. He and the late Bob Wells initially delivered the program in Southern Iowa. This highly successful program has gone on to be held 100 times across Iowa, and is now a national program with facilitators across the country, and reaches women involved in all aspects of management of a farm operation.

**Evaluating Your Estate Plan** began in 2011 with a \$33,000 grant from NCRME that created a day-long program and a series of educational materials (13 publications, 5 worksheets, 5 case studies, and the slides used in the program) that remain in use today. In the initial run of the program, there were 395 participants at 13 sites, well beyond the goals of the grant proposal.

Coming off the success of Evaluating Your Estate Plan, in 2013, Tim saw the tides of agriculture turning and a need for more education focused on farm finances. Through another NCRMEC start-up grant, he and other members of the farm management team created a set of 3 programs for **Rocking the Boat: Farm Finances**. These included a 45-minute *Your Key Ratio* program that was delivered across the state Crop Advantage Series meetings, a day-long *Deep Water or High Tide?* program that used a case study to build a farm's financial picture and learn the basics of a solid financial foundation, and an in-depth multi-session *Moving Beyond the Basics* program seeking a deeper understanding of financial literacy.

**Farmland Leasing Arrangement Meetings** are a core Farm Management program offered across the state each summer. Tim has played a lead role for several years in developing the core program presentation and also used his SW programs as a pilot for unique program delivery methods, in recent years this has included a cost of production and piece of the pie "games" that give participants a more hands-on approach to understanding costs for corn and soybean production. Farmland owners removed from the day-to-day farm operations were aware of changes in grain prices but often caught by surprise at what their farm tenants were paying for various input costs. Statewide each year, Farmland Leasing Meetings reach approximately 2,000 tenants and landowners at 80-90 meetings.

Through multiple rounds of **Farm Bill** legislation, Tim served as the Extension Educator in his area, providing educational programs to help farmland owners and producers in understanding the relevant components in each Farm Bill and utilized the tools available to help them make the best decision for their farm. With the most recent, 2014 Farm Bill, Tim played a lead role for the Farm Management team in developing the core materials used in the 230 educational programs held around the state for over 15,000 attendees. Prior to presenting the programs, Tim took extra steps to connect with FSA staff in his area, building stronger relationships and creating a common message for the producers and farmland owners impacted by the legislation.

While Tim often took a lead role in program development, he also served as a guiding partner for groups that came together in other unique ways such as the group that refer to themselves as "Generation Farmers". This group consists mainly of women farmland owners who are not directly involved in the day-to-day operations on their farmland but seek a deeper understanding in their role as a landowner and the issues their tenants face, ranging from farm profitability to leases to changing land practices.

## Type of Change(s)

- Learning Changes
- Behavior Changes
- Condition Changes

## Impact Statement

Tim Eggers has practiced the mission of Extension in his daily work. Eggers has great skill in seeing a need and finding a way to meet it. Since he began as a field economist in 1996, his work is methodical, and he continuously assesses the impact his actions have on Iowa citizens. Tim provides demand-driven educational programming and targets underserved audiences with unique learning needs. His programs regularly focus on educating Iowa citizens on the agricultural decision-making process and the expected economic impacts of their decisions. The programs he has developed will have a lasting impact on the lives of Iowans.

### **ISUEO Signature Issues**

Food & the Environment --> Farm Business Management

### **Outcomes**

Start-up funding for programs Tim developed often came from grants through the North Central Risk Management Education Center. Usually ahead of the curve, he received many requests to adapt the Iowa version of successful programs to Extension services in other states.

Evaluations from Evaluating Your Estate Plan showed that participants had:

- an improved understanding of the basic estate planning subjects of forms of property ownership, wills, and trusts
- gained the knowledge and confidence required to prepare for, develop and begin implementing an estate planning process
- learned the vocabulary which will improve communication with their tax and legal advisors
- acquired the skills needed to calculate the costs of various estate planning options
- reviewed current legal and tax regulations affecting estate planning
- set goals and learn strategies to foster dialog

95% of the participants indicated they know what they need to take when visiting an attorney about their estate plan.

84% of the participants indicated they were likely to visit an attorney to revise their will as a result of what they learned at the program, and in a follow-up survey, 64% indicated they had met with an attorney.

**When word of Tim's career change got out, he received multiple messages highlighting his lasting impacts on his clients.**

The Generation Farmers shared that "Tim Eggers has been with us from the beginning and has helped us plan our topics and speakers numerous times. He has been our speaker for the majority of our meetings. In addition, he has helped connect us to new members. If it hadn't been for his help in the first few years, our group would probably not still be gathering together." Tim's role as the local connection for this group was instrumental in our on-going success.

The greatest success I have seen has been the change I have observed in one of our non-resident members. When I first meet her she was angry. She felt disconnected and frustrated. The farm had become a burden. Now, as I observe her, she enjoys her visits back to the farm. She has friends to visit and it is not all business. She smiles more and is most likely easier to work with. I think finding ways to give non-resident landowners stronger connections to the communities where they own land is a win/win scenario, as they are likely to:

- visit more, bring friends and spend more in the local businesses
- be easier to work with
- be better stewards of the land
- be more likely to support local charities.

*Tim,*

*Your dedication and vast, deep knowledge working in your ISU area impressed me so....Mary Jane's vision in connecting with women landowners has been priceless. We learn so much from each other and are a great support group, as well.*

*Thank you so much for all you have been, for all you contributed through ISU, and for all the helpful learning.*

*Perhaps you will run across someone in that area who might want to connect with other women landowners in a similar way and establish a group; she/they could contact us if it would be helpful. Hopefully your transition isn't too much culture shock, going from urban to rural. Be safe and best wishes,*

*Dear Tim,*

*... I received a phone call from Belinda Greene at the USDA-NRCS office in Malvern telling me that I had been selected to be "Woman Farmer of the Year"... Although it is being given to me, I realize that whatever I have been able to accomplish that is valued by the Mills County Soil and Water Conservation Board has only happened because of you and your understanding of the issues that women land owners face.*

*...Thank you for being willing to answer my questions about farming, farm management issues, leases etc. This information has been extremely important to me...Although the recognition is being given to me, this award would not have ever happened without your support and efforts....I wanted to thank you for your expertise and patience in explaining local practices. This can be so overwhelming without having that kind of input and guidance. Words cannot begin to tell you how thankful that I feel for all that you have done to help to educate me and others. I most likely would not be receiving this kind of a recognition without your help. Thank you!!!!*

#### **Location / Participant(s) Came From**

- Multi-State
- State

#### **Partner(s)**

- Business and Industry
- Commodity Group
- County Extension Staff
- Local Government/Agency